**October 2019**

**To explore the potential value of being a “pickleball-friendly” Tennis Club, the Tennis Committee proposes Board consideration and approval for a one-year trial of Pickleball play at Our Court.**

**Rationale:**

Ongoing costs of club operations and maintenance investments exceed revenue. Fiscal management requires increase in revenue (membership sales, annual maintenance fees, guest fees, events & activities fees) and/or decrease in expense (management costs, facility maintenance, capital investments, supplies). **Inclusion of pickleball play at OC** is one strategy being considered to support sustainability of a cost-effective club by:

*Providing an opportunity for more guest and/or court rental fees:*

- One tennis court offers playing time for 8-10 pickleball players per 1 ½ hr session

- Hartford Rec wants to continue (and potentially expand) their winter PB program.

- Norwich Club, currently offering outdoor PB, is growing and wants a winter play option

*Retention of current members:*

- PB offers an option for exercise and continued engagement with the club for members who are considering release of their membership due to physical limitations or age that has limited their tennis playing.

- PB supports the club goal of providing opportunities for friendships, fun, social activities, and engagement with the extended tennis community.

*Recruitment of new members:*

- Popularity of PB across the country, and locally, is showing significant growth

- The more exposure of the club to people who don’t know about OC, the more opportunity for new members

**Goals:**

- $3000 additional revenue for the year in court rentals

- $3000 additional revenue in guest fees and associate membership sales

- OC member satisfaction with court availability and quality of both tennis and PB play as measured by survey

**Recommendations for a trial of OC as a Pickleball-friendly[[1]](#footnote-1) Tennis Club:**

1. Paint PB lines on Court 2
2. Allow use of ball machine on either court 1 or court 2
3. Designate days/times of PB availability based on the club’s utilization data. Start with the days/times when both courts are most frequently vacant (see recommended schedule below). These are the only times that Members and Guests can play PB. Equity members still retain the right to reserve the function room and courts for private events that could involve PB play (for example, if an Equity member is hosting a group of players for pot-luck social and rotating play on court…could be either tennis or PB)
4. Increase court rental to $75/2 hr. PB session (from $60)
5. Decrease 3-month Associate membership to $300 (instead of $350)
6. Change the court reservation system to allow Equity Members 7 days advance court reservation and Associate Members 5 days advance court reservation; primarily as a “value-added” to being an Equity member since we are recommending a reduction in the 3-month Associate membership price.
7. Add two columns to the court reservation screen, labeled Pickleball A and Pickleball B, each with specified schedule of availability for PB sign-up.
8. Engage Hartford Rec for PB court rental on Monday nights for fall/winter. Include in the rental agreement the assignment of responsibility to a Hartford Rec person for club access and closure for PB play so that an OC member does not have to host. (The goal is for Associate Membership sales to these players)
9. Offer Norwich PB court rental on Saturday nights either 5:30-7:30 or 7:00-9:00. Include in the rental agreement the assignment of responsibility to a Norwich PB person for club access and closure for PB play so that an OC member does not have to host. (There are already one or two OC members in the Norwich PB group, who could serve this role)
10. Add pickleball opportunities to the website, send email to all current members, and have OC membership marketing material available on-site.
11. Have quick card surveys available for members to provide feedback/satisfaction/complaints at the completion of play and drop in the box. Concerns presented thus far have been collected (see list below) and will be assessed.
12. Track and report utilization and sales results to the Board after 6 months with any recommendations for changes in the remaining 6 months of the plan
13. Check with insurance provider to validate need for guest player waiver or not.

**Proposed Schedule of PB Availability:**

Friday: 7:00 pm

Saturday: 7:00 am, 5:30 pm\*, 7:00 pm\*

Sunday: 7:00 am, 7:00 pm

Monday: 11:30 am, 7:00 pm\*

Tuesday: 1:00 pm

Thursday: 8:30am

\* It is anticipated that Harford Rec will want to reserve Monday 7:00-9:00pm and

Norwich will want either 5:30-7:30pm or 7:00-9:00 on Saturday. Only the group court rentals are for 2 hours. All other PB friendly times are the usual 1 ½ hr slots

**Concerns of Current Members**

*Reduced satisfaction in quality of tennis play:*

- Noise of pickleball play and players are distracting

- Visual distraction of additional lines

- Over time it becomes more of a PB club than Tennis club

*Court availability*

1. All marketing and communications are to abide by the premise that Our Court is a Tennis Club that offers an opportunity to also play Pickleball, ie “pickleball-friendly”. This proposal is not recommending that Our Court become a Pickleball Club and does not recommend selling of PB exclusive memberships. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)